

**National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, DC 20594**

Brief of Accident

Adopted 04/15/2003

DEN02GA039 File No. 12971	04/26/2002	USAF Academy, CO	Aircraft Reg No. N990CC	Time (Local): 12:08 MDT		
Make/Model:	Piper/Cub Crafters / PA-18-150			Fatal	Serious	Minor/None
Engine Make/Model:	Lycoming / O-360-CIG		Crew	1	0	0
Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed		Pass	0	0	0
Number of Engines:	1					
Operating Certificate(s):	None					
Type of Flight Operation:	Public Use					
Reg. Flight Conducted Under:	Public Use					
Last Depart. Point: Same as Accident/Incident Location				Condition of Light: Day		
Destination: Local Flight				Weather Info Src: Weather Observation Facility		
Airport Proximity: Off Airport/Airstrip				Basic Weather: Visual Conditions		
				Lowest Ceiling: 6500 Ft. AGL, Broken		
				Visibility: 15.00 SM		
				Wind Dir/Speed: 210 / 014 Kts		
				Temperature (°C): 16		
				Precip/Obscuration: None		
Pilot-in-Command	Age: 72			Flight Time (Hours)		
Certificate(s)/Rating(s)				Total All Aircraft: 15479		
Commercial; Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land				Last 90 Days: 150		
Instrument Ratings				Total Make/Model: 8000		
Airplane				Total Instrument Time: UnK/Nr		

During a tow approximately 7,500 feet msl, the glider was positioned above and to the right of the tow plane. The tow plane suddenly rolled left and descended in a vertical spiral, pulling the glider with it. After making several attempts to release the tow, the cadet instructor heard a loud "snap" and the glider broke free. The tow plane struck the ground, exploded, and burned. The glider returned to the airport and landed without further incident. The tow plane's tow hook was found unlatched and the tow line was draped over the surrounding trees. One end of the rope, with eyelet still attached, was next to the tow plane. The other end had failed and the braids were "feathered." No anomalies with the glider's latching mechanism were noted. The portion of tow rope and hook that attached to the glider was not located. Postmortem examination disclosed "significant atherosclerotic plaque deposition" of the coronary arteries.

Brief of Accident (Continued)

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Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

1. (C) REASON FOR OCCURRENCE UNDETERMINED

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings Legend: (C) = Cause, (F) = Factor

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident as follows.
The loss of control for undetermined reasons.